

Middle East News

Southern Yemenis back breakaway state

ADEN (R) — Amid the turmoil of war, southern Yemenis are savouring the birth of their breakaway state and the end of an unhappy four-year union with northern rivals.

The south's May 21 declaration of independence has fired up its soldiers on the frontlines and leaders, academics and troops say there should be no going back to the North-South merger.

Troops at the front heard they had their own state hours after southern leader Ali Salem Beidh announced creation of the Democratic Republic of Yemen.

"I didn't know. We now have a state. Excellent, super," said Abdullah Abdul Ghaleel, 32, a civilian volunteer on the Abyan front northeast of Aden.

"Yes, secession is much better," said Yasser Mohammad Saleh, a 17-year-old volunteer.

Soldiers fighting northern troops said the declaration gave them added incentive to defend Aden. Mr. Beidh's stronghold which Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh has vowed to bring to heel.

Some southerners saw the merger of North Yemen and South Yemen in May 1990 as an attempt by Mr. Saleh to annex the less populous and oil-rich south and say they will never again accept him as leader.

"The unity will not return. We will not accept Saleh as president again," said Captain Abdul Rahim Qassem at the battlefield. "The four years of unity are equivalent to 129 years of British occupation."

Simmering differences last year between Mr. Saleh and Mr. Beidh, who served as vice president, over power sharing in the united Yemen government erupted into civil war on May 4.

Lion bites trainer to death in Kuwait

KUWAIT (R) — A circus lion killed its Romanian woman trainer after a trick went wrong during a show in a suburb of Kuwait, a newspaper reported Saturday. The lion plunged its teeth into the neck of 52-year-old trainer Elena Tiba after it fell on her while performing a jump from one pedestal to another Thursday night, the Arab Times said. "Elena died doing the thing she most loved. Her act is finished," said Cezar Tiba, the victim's husband, who tried to rescue her from the jaws of the lion that bore his name.

Turkey asks Greece to explain rebel Kurdish links

ANKARA (R) — Captured Kurdish separatists have confessed they trained in neighbouring Greece for sabotage missions in Turkey, the Turkish Foreign Ministry said Friday.

The terrorists admitted they came from Frankfurt to Athens and were given terrorist training in a camp in Greece, ministry spokesman Ferhat Ataman said.

He said the Greek ambassador to Ankara was summoned to the Foreign Ministry on May 18 and confronted with in-

formation from the Kurds' confessions.

"We have stated the gravity of the fact that the PKK (the Kurdish Workers Party) is trained in Greek soil and have asked for an explanation," he said. Greece has not replied.

Turkey said the guerrillas were caught by Istanbul police more than a month ago after slipping across the Meric River at the Turkish-Greek border.

He said statements by about 20 members of the PKK were videotaped by police.

"They have confessed they

would have sabotaged touristic, economic and military targets," Mr. Ataman said.

Policemen in the west coast city of Izmir also said Thursday they had captured 16 men and a woman who trained at a PKK camp in Greece for attacks on tourist sites.

Police said the militants had bought an expensive speedboat to travel between the Greek islands and Ayvalik on the Turkey's Aegean coast.

"Greece is long overdue to remember and implement its international obligations

against terrorism and end its hostile policies towards Turkey," Mr. Ataman added.

"Those who sow the wind will reap the whirlwind."

He said the ministry informed the U.S., French, British and German ambassadors of its complaints. All four are like both Greece and Turkey, members of the NATO Western alliance.

Nearly 12,000 people have died since 1984 in the PKK's guerrilla war for a separate Kurdish state in the southeast Turkey.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Lebanon executes cop killer

SHTOURA, Lebanon (R) — A drug dealer who murdered three policemen was executed by firing squad in this eastern Lebanese Saturday. Shaker Omran Al Breidi, who shot the policemen as they tried to arrest him in March, was the fourth convicted killer to be executed since parliament earlier this year made the death penalty obligatory in murder cases. Mr. Breidi, who was tried by military court for killing security personnel, was the second person executed by firing squad in Lebanon since 1949. Death penalties handed down by civil courts are carried out by hanging.

Thai court frees Saudi murder suspect

BANGKOK (AFP) — Thailand's Supreme Court has acquitted a local man accused of the 1989 murder of a Saudi diplomat, saying witnesses could not remember enough detail of the killer's face, reports said Saturday. Judge Jaran Hathakham Friday freed Adinan Songkerwala, 26, a third secretary at the Saudi embassy, the news reports said. Mr. Maliki was shot several times with a 6.35 mm pistol in front of his apartment in central Bangkok. The assassin fled. Three witnesses identified Mr. Adinan as the killer, but Mr. Jaran noted they had said they could not remember much detail about the assassin because they were in shock. Police believe Mr. Maliki was ordered killed by owners of Thai job placement agencies because he uncovered forged documents prepared by the agencies and refused visas to Thai workers. Three other Saudi embassy employees and a Saudi businessman were killed in 1989 and 1990. The five deaths and the theft of \$20 million in gems from a Saudi prince by a Thai servant led Riyad in 1990 to downgrade its embassy and stop issuing Thais visas. Thailand last year declared that international terrorists had killed the four embassy employees. A police lieutenant colonel is on trial for the kidnapping and death of the businessman. Eight Thais, all but one a policeman, are on trial in the gems case, in which some of the jewelry was never recovered and much of what was given back was fake. Interior Ministry officials are considering indicting eight more officers in the case, including former police chief Sawasdi Amornvivat and Police General Sanong Wattanawangkul.

S. Lebanon militiamen capture guerrilla

NABATIYEH, Lebanon (R) — Israeli-backed militiamen captured a militant Muslim guerrilla outside Israel's occupation zone in South Lebanon Friday, security sources said. South Lebanon Army (SLA) militiamen seized the guerrilla, identified as belonging to the pro-Iranian Hizbullah group, on Nabi Taber Hill just outside the zone, they added. He was armed with an AK-47 assault rifle. Hours later Hizbullah guerrillas fired mortar bombs at posts manned by Israeli and SLA men on the edge of the zone, the sources said. No one was hurt. Israeli and SLA gunners responded with artillery against guerrilla-held hills to the north, the outskirts of the market town of Nabatiyeh and the nearby village of Kfar Tibnit. One civil defence worker was wounded by shrapnel while trying to put out fires that broke out in wheat fields near Nabatiyeh as a result of the shelling. Hizbullah (party of God) guerrillas launch attacks almost daily on the Israeli-held zone in their bid to liberate South Lebanon.

Turkey: U.S. aid restriction unfair

ANKARA (R) — Turkey has rejected as unfair and unjustified a U.S. congressional decision to restrict military aid to Turkey pending a report on its human rights practices. The House of Representatives has not served Turkish-U.S. interests by this unfair decision which has no factual basis, Foreign Ministry spokesman Ferhat Ataman said. "Turkey, fighting terrorism for years, does not find it right that conditions should be imposed on aid for false reasons and justifications." The U.S. House of Representatives, which approved Wednesday a \$13.5 billion foreign aid bill for fiscal 1995, withheld a quarter of the \$364 million earmarked for Turkey in foreign military sales, pending developments on human rights and on Cyprus. Ankara rejects Western criticism that it is violating the rights of Kurds in the southeast, where security forces have been fighting guerrillas of the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) since 1984. Nearly 12,000 people have died since then. "There is no Kurdish problem in Turkey but one of terrorism. Our Western friends have trouble distinguishing between the two," President Suleyman Demirel said.

Britain expels Iranian official

LONDON (R) — Britain has ordered the expulsion of an Iranian diplomat but is keeping the move secret to avoid any retaliation by Tehran, the Guardian newspaper reported. A spokesman for the British Foreign Office said he could not comment on what he called "speculation." The Guardian said Iranian Charge d'Affaires Gholamreza Ansari was summoned to the Foreign Office to be told of the decision to expel the embassy official, who was not named by the newspaper. Last month Britain expressed its annoyance at covert contacts between Iran and IRA guerrilla organisation, which is trying to force Britain to leave Northern Ireland. Foreign Office Minister Douglas Hogg summoned Mr. Ansari to tell him of Britain's displeasure and ask him to stop the contacts. In reply Iran called in Britain's top diplomat in Tehran to dismiss Britain's accusations. At the time British officials said they would maintain their vigilance said "judge the Iranian government by its actions and not its words." The diplomatic spat further clouded relations between the two countries, which hit their low over the death sentence for blasphemy imposed by former Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini on Salman Rushdie for his novel "The Satanic Verses." Iran broke off relations with Britain in 1989 over the "fatwa" on the Indian-born British author. Britain reopened its mission in Tehran soon after resuming diplomatic relations at the charge d'affaire level in September 1990.

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

11:30 ... Le Monde Est A Vous ... Fair ... (Sunrise) ... Dhuhr ... 12:30 ... You & Your Life ... Asr ... 12:30 ... The House of Elton ... Maghrib ... 21:10 ... The Upper Hand ... Isha

PRAYER TIMES

03:55 ... Fajr ... (Sunrise) ... Dhuhr ... 05:27 ... Asr ... 12:30 ... Maghrib ... 21:11 ... Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swieifieh, Tel: 810740

Archdiocese of God Church, Tel: 632785

St. Joseph Church Tel: 624590

Church of the Annunciation Tel: 637440

De la Salle Church Tel: 601757

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Church of the Annunciation Tel: 623541

Anglican Church Tel: 630851. Tel: 628543.

Armenian Catholic Church Tel: 771331.

Assyrian Orthodox Church Tel: 775261.

St. Epiphany Church Tel: 771751.

Assyrian International Church Tel: 652526.

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel: 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel: 684195

The Latter-Day Saints Tel: 654932

Church of Nazarene Tel: 675691

Church of the Annunciation Tel: 624590

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel: 811295

Min./Max. temp.

Dr. Fayed Al Oqidi Tel: 249743

Aquadis pharmacy Tel: (-)

Water Authority Tel: 16/35

Deserts Tel: 21/36

Jordan Valley Tel: 21/36

Yesterday's high temperatures: Am-

man 24 / 38

Aqaba 16 / 35

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Hospital Police Tel: 043402

Police Traffic Department Tel: 067021

Police Coast Guard Tel: 639811

Price Complainants Tel: 641176

Water and Sewerage Tel: 067467

Complaints Tel: 067467

Amman Municipality Tel: 067101/15

Queen Alia Hospital Tel: 06234954

Amal Hospital Tel: 0674155

Palestine Shmeissani Hospital Tel: 0641714

Shmeissani Hospital Tel: 064155

Al-Muasher Hospital Tel: 0672779

The Islamic Abdali Tel: 06412737

Al-Ahli Abdali Tel: 0641646

Al-Muhajirah Tel: 06771103

Al-Bayan Ashrafi Tel: 067115

Amman Markets Tel: 06161115

Queen Alia Hospital Tel: 06234954

Zarqa City Hospital Tel: 06948323

Zarqa National Hospital Tel: 069483241

Al-Sabea Hospital Tel: 069486732

Al-Hams Modern Hospital Tel: 06949904

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Americans for Peace Now see economic revival with peace

AMMAN (Petra) — The head of a visiting group of members of the board of directors of Americans for Peace Now (APN), a Jewish-American non-governmental organisation, Saturday underlined the importance of establishing peace in the Middle East for the benefit of all countries in the region.

Linda Heller Kamm, who was speaking at a meeting with Mohammad Asfour, chairman of the Amman Chamber of Commerce, said that countries of the Middle East will enjoy security and stability and witness economic prosperity after peace

has been established. Mrs. Kamm and the accompanying delegation, which leaves Sunday for the occupied Arab territories to study the situation there, reviewed political and economic issues currently facing Jordan and the region, and the role which the United States can play in support of the area's economic revival.

Mr. Asfour outlined the chamber's activities and its rule in the Jordanian economy.

Emphasising the heavy burdens Jordan has shouldered as a result of instability in the region and the absence of peace, Mr. Asfour said

that the Kingdom has received many pledges for assistance during this difficult stage, but has received nothing.

The visiting delegation Thursday met with Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Tafal Al Hassan and reviewed with him the Palestine issue and the refugee problem, as well as Jordan's peace efforts.

According to APN Washington Office Director Gail Pressberger the purpose of the group's visit is to understand Jordan's perceptions of the peace process and bilateral U.S.-Jordan relations.

ESCWA to discuss regional cooperation

AMMAN — Ministerial delegations from the 13-member states of the United Nations' Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) met at the Forte Grand Hotel today for the opening of the commission's 17th ministerial session. Held under the patronage of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the three-day session will discuss regional cooperation and economic and social development.

Included on the session's agenda is ESCWA's budgetary and financial situation and its medium-term plan for 1992-1997, as well as the proposed amendments to ESCWA's work programme and its priorities for 1994-1995 and for 1996-1997.

Delegates will review the progress made in implementing ESCWA's work programme for 1992-1993, which includes the commission's substantive work as well as its performance in the realm of technical cooperation.

The issue of ESCWA's permanent location will also be taken up by the delegates. Proposals from Jordan, Lebanon and Qatar to host the commission on a permanent basis will be studied, as will Iraq's renewed offer to resume hosting the commission. ESCWA has been temporarily based in Amman since the Gulf crisis in 1991.

Session participants will examine the social and economic conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, as well as the social and economic conditions of Syrian citizens under Israeli occupation in the Syrian Golan Heights.

In addition, ESCWA's regional cooperation and coordination activities in the areas of the environment and sustainable development will be assessed, and regional preparations for upcoming U.N. conferences will be reviewed.

Ministry to impose strict measures on private water tanker services

By Elia Nasrallah
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Health Ministry Saturday announced plans to impose strict measures on private water tanker businesses, including severe penalties for those which violate safety regulations.

Health Minister Abdul Rahim Malhas said that from June 4 to 30, inspection teams will conduct an intensive campaign of spot checks to ensure that such services are providing potable and safe drinking water to consumers.

According to Oais Halaweh, head of the Health Department in Amman Governorate, a similar campaign launched last April found 28 water tanker owners in violation of safety standards.

Both the minister and Dr. Halaweh stressed that not only will violators be fined, but their licences could be revoked and the springs shut down.

According to Dr. Malhas, the water from the springs is tested regularly, and certain amounts of chlorine should

be present, among other conditions. "We are determined to prevent the import of water to Amman from the nearly 25 springs located outside the perimeter of the Greater Amman region unless we are 100 per cent sure that it is safe for drinking and that the same measures are being applied to all other springs and water tankers in other governorates," said Dr. Malhas.

Meanwhile, Dr. Malhas announced that he has directed various health departments to conduct a general survey of all dairy plants to ensure that they do not recycle returned yoghurt after their expiry dates.

The minister said that samples of dairy products would be taken for laboratory tests on regular basis.



ARAB ENGINEERING: The Executive Bureau of the Arab Engineers Federation Saturday opens its meetings in Amman with the participation of delegates from Iraq, Sudan, Lebanon and Egypt in addition to Jordan. Participants in the two-day meetings, which are chaired by Federation Vice-President Husni Abu Ghaida, will discuss decisions taken by the bureau in

earlier meetings, following up the implementation of these decisions and the federation's future plans, in addition to other issues. Mr. Abu Ghaida told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that the bureau will also discuss issues pertaining to the establishment of an engineering information centre through a Libyan donation (Petra photo)

Noël Favrelière's 'ephemeral circle'

By Ica Wahbeh
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

ment of his "crime" so the artist could resume a normal life.

AMMAN — "The ephemeral circle" could be the rough translation of the French name Noël Favrelière gives his novel exhibition at Darat Al Funun.

Ephemeral, he says, because "instead of talking, I draw on the walls and then I erase it," says the director of the French Cultural Centre who had not exhibited in over eight years.

And circle because, after quoting the Japanese Hokusai who had said: "A point or a line is (something living)," the artist asks: "What do you say then of a circle or a right angle?" trying to stress the living quality of the two basic geometric figures he deals with at his exhibition.

Mr. Favrelière had started his painting studies in France when the Algerian war broke. His open siding with the opinion that Algeria should be liberated brought upon him a death sentence and 10 years of exile.

The years of exile were not spent fruitless. Mr. Favrelière restarted his studies, this time of the history of art at Columbia University in New York, and then at Ljubljana University in present Slovenia.

He would hold exhibitions in the U.S. and even France, where people "would not come for my art but because of the death sentence hanging over my head."

General Charles de Gaulle ended his exile with an annul-

ment of his "crime" so the artist could resume a normal life.

What he has today at Darat Al Funun is "not an installation, it is a demonstration. The exhibition aims at showing that "we can reach pure sensations without having to look at reality."

It is the artist says, what the Russian Malevitch (the creator of suprematism) was doing 80 years ago with his painting "Black square on white background," a work done not to impress the bourgeoisie of the time, but as a logic process that started with Cezanne who "wanted to treat nature by means of the cube, the cylinder, the sphere and the cone, passing through cubism and the Italian futurism."

In the same way the neopressionist, pointillist painter juxtaposes blue and yellow dots in order to make the viewer see green, Mr. Favrelière does not finish his lines and curves, knowing that someone will do it.

If the first case is a matter of physics, optics to be more precise, in the second, the phenomenon is a mental one. To strengthen his point, Mr. Favrelière cites a line written by Leonardo da Vinci 500 years ago that says: "Painting is something mental."

The artist finds affinity between his work, the Islamic geometric art and Zen art, and seeing his frames drawn on the walls of the exhibition will prove him right.

Perhaps Mr. Favrelière's



The work of Noël Favrelière

words explain best his art philosophy and help understand his "ephemeral" work: "Art is not an answer but a question that generates other

questions... till the end."

The exhibition, inaugurated on May 28, will be on until June 3.

Qaboos meets

(Continued from page 1)

cil meeting on Yemen. Only Oman is a council member and its ambassador, Salim Bin Mohammed Al Khussaibi, is scheduled to take over the rotating council presidency next Wednesday.

Diplomats in Muscat noted that Sultan Qaboos did not meet northern Foreign Minister Mohammad Salem Basendwa on his May 16 visit, although he was carrying a letter from Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh to the Sultan.

Mr. Basendwa was met by Oman's minister of state for foreign affairs, Yousef Bin Alawi Bin Abdullah.

WHAT'S GOING ON

DRAMA

* Drama in Arabic entitled "An Old Comedy" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Installation entitled "Ephemeras of a Circle" by artist Noël Favrelière at Darat Al Funun of the Abdul Hamid Shoman Foundation in Jabal Luweibdeh at 5:00 p.m. (Tel. 643251/2).

* Exhibition of paintings by disabled children at the Royal Cultural Centre.

* Exhibition of paintings by 20 Jordanian and Iraqi artists (including Waled Orfali, Hussein Da'seb, Waddah Al Ward, Adnan Al Hilu and Mahmoud Hussein) at Orfali Art Gallery in Umm Uthaina (Tel. 826932).

* Exhibition by 46 artists entitled "He, Bonjour Monsieur La Fotaine" at the French Cultural Centre.

* Exhibition of water colour paintings by artist Itab Freih and another exhibition of ceramics by Sajida Al Mashaliki at Ain Art Gallery in Wadi Saqra (Tel. 644451, 652823).

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Diplomatic efforts bear fruit

WITH southern Yemeni forces succeeding in part to stop the drive by northern Yemeni troops towards Aden, the stage is set again for diplomatic activity to bring the two sides back to the negotiating table. The flurry of diplomatic activity, both on the regional and international levels, to halt the armed hostilities between Sanaa and Aden, appears to bear fruit with the announcement that the U.N. Security Council is about to step in and adopt a resolution calling for the cessation of the armed conflict and the resumption of peace talks.

Fortunately, the fresh attempts to settle the dispute between the north and the south have not been accompanied by the recognition of the breakaway state of southern Yemen. Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh's first priority has been the preservation of the national unity of his country and short of the dismemberment of his nation anything could be put once again on the negotiating table. Even the avowed supporters of Yemeni Vice President Ali Salem Al Beidh have refused to yield to the pressure exerted by him to accord his secessionist efforts approval and endorsement.

The southern Yemeni leader's precipitous decision to declare independence for his breakaway state suggests that his first priority was never the national interest of his country. The lack of support for that decision cannot be explained except as a major setback for his shortsighted policies. It is one thing to differ and quite another to put the overall interest of the country on the line.

With both sides not able to achieve their primary goals, the stalemate can no longer be resolved on the battlefield. The major Arab players have not burnt their bridges with either side by first staying aloof from the armed conflict and then by not granting recognition to Aden. There is room therefore for an effective Arab mediation whose target must be first the national unity of the country and second the resolution of the political division that has persisted even after the declaration of the unity between the two parts of the country four years ago.

Nothing short of a national election could permanently and effectively rectify the existing shortcomings in the political infrastructure of Yemen and the sooner that the two sides put their faith in democracy and human rights the better it would be for the entire Yemeni people. This could be easier said than done in view of the deep and strong roots of tribalism and underdevelopment that pervade all aspects of life in Yemen. Still an effort needs to be made to phase out tribalism as a political base for the country, and introducing pluralistic democracy can be the only viable route for attaining this very objective.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

UNITY OR END OF UNITY in Yemen is a matter that is no longer of concern to the majority of Arab masses who only care about the innocent lives that are being wasted and the institutions that are being devastated, said Al Ra'i daily Saturday. For this reason, Arab masses can only hope that the leaders of Sanaa and Aden will opt for dialogue and end of bloodshed and prevent any foreign intervention that could prolong the civil war, said the daily. Reports that elements from both sides have been in constant over the prospect of opening a dialogue to end the conflict are welcome news to the Arab masses, said the paper. In addition, one can only hope that heads of Arab regimes would seek reconciliation in a collective effort to bring the fighting to a halt and prevent any internationalisation of the Yemeni question, added the daily. But what is more important for the moment is for the leaders of North and South Yemen to exert more strenuous efforts towards a final settlement and safeguarding their nation's interests and future.

A COLUMNIST in Al Dustour daily Saturday urged Arab states to extend a helping hand to the newly established autonomy rule in Gaza and Jericho. The two areas serve as a defence line for the Arab Nation in general and Jordan in particular, and any progress achieved in the two areas, which have been liberated as a first step, means a strengthening of the frontline defences protecting the Arab World from Zionist expansionist plans, said Mohmmad Subeih. The writer said if the two autonomy areas enjoy prosperity, their inhabitants will not be encouraged to abandon their homeland and this can best be achieved through pumping more funds to build up the Arab territories economically, socially and politically. According to the writer, 40 per cent of the total workforce in Gaza is currently unemployed and these people ought to be helped to hold on to their national soil by their Arab brothers who can and should help preserve Arab presence in any part of the occupied territories and Palestine at large. He warned that unless the promised Palestinian and other Arab funds arrive in time, the Arab people in the autonomy rule as well as lands still under occupation are bound to witness further sufferings.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

Water prices must be reformed

THE HEAVILY subsidised price of irrigation water in the Jordan Valley is about to cause a major loss to Jordan. The government committed itself to raise the price per cubic metre from 6 fils to 10 fils, but it is still hesitating to make the unavoidable decision, which admittedly will be unpopular, unless the public opinion is well-informed and prepared.

The direct operational cost of delivering water to the farms was estimated at 26 fils per cubic metre, while overall cost was estimated at 48 fils. Water was sold to the farmers at the symbolic price of 3 fils, raised five years ago, i.e., before the devaluation of the dinar to 6 fils. It is time now to adjust the price upwards to at least 10 fils, which will secure the recovery of 38 per cent of the variable cost leaving a direct subsidy of 62 per cent or a total subsidy of 80 per cent. This is only a step towards more adjustments in the future until the farms cover all the actual direct cost of the water they consume.

This difficult decision is a must due to two reasons: The first is economic. Water is one of the most scarce resources in the country, its price therefore should be raised in order to curb waste, and to put the available quantity to the best usage to maximise productivity. Raising the price is justified for conservation purposes even if the cost was lower than the price.

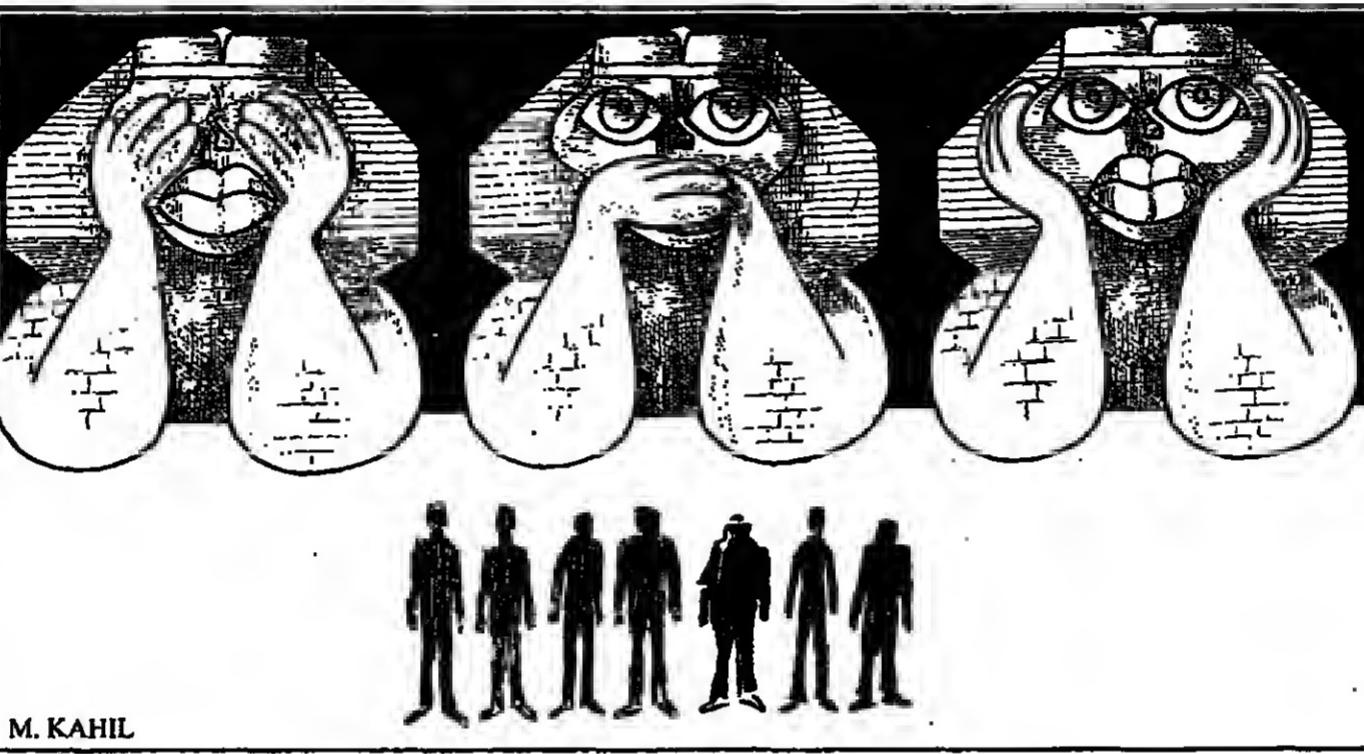
The second and equally important reason is that the donor countries and the World Bank are extremely unhappy observing the inefficiency in managing this scarce resource despite its acute shortage. They are willing to assist Jordan to develop water and agricultural sectors provided we do our bit in assisting ourselves. Europeans extended two soft loans from the European Investment Bank (EIB) to finance irrigation and agricultural projects. The Consultative Group of Donors, in their meeting in Paris on May 17, committed \$200 million of grants and soft loans to finance sectoral structural adjustment reforms. In both cases the grants and loans are conditional and subject to gradual raising of water prices as a pre-condition for

becoming available. The Europeans patience ran out after prolonged failure by the government to act as agreed upon. They suspended the loans of the EIB until the price of water is raised. The donors of the Consultative Group, which allocated \$200 million payable to Jordan, during the second half of 1994 to close the financial gap, will not pay a cent if the failure of the government to make the decision continued. Since we have a responsible government in charge and not a do-nothing bunch of paralysed ministers, we expect a decision very soon.

What happens if the government decided tomorrow to raise the price of irrigation water from 6 to 10 fils per cubic metre? Will the sky fall on the ground and the farmers go bankrupt. Of course our sensational weekly newspapers would announce a 67 per cent rise in the price, which, they would claim, would kill the poor farmers.

But what are the facts? The additional cost which will be borne by the farmers will be in the order of JD \$600,000, i.e., less than one million dollar, but the farmers will definitely gain much more when the government spends \$300 million to develop agriculture and irrigation, which is contingent upon raising the price of water. The feasibility of the decision is thus obvious and the failure to make use of \$300 million is harmful to the national economy in general and the farmers in particular.

The gross output of agriculture in Jordan is roughly estimated at JD 400 million a year, of which some JD 220 million represent value added, and JD 180 million represent inputs. The cost of raising the price of water is therefore no more than one third of one per cent of the cost of inputs, or one seventh of one per cent of the price of the final output. It is a trivial amount that is less than 4 per cent of the cost of polyculture packages bought by the farmers each year without complaining.



M. KAHIL

Israel sees good ties with S. Africa

By Susan Sappir
Reuter

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM — Israel's withdrawal from occupied lands coinciding with the end of white rule in South Africa could bode well for future relations, despite the Jewish state's links with the scrapped apartheid regime.

"We know the affinity between Mandela and leaders of the PLO, especially Chairman Yasser Arafat," Mr. Antebi said.

Since Israel talks to Mr. Arafat now, after refusing to do so for years, Mr. Mandela can now embrace Israel, he added.

One of the first world figures Mr. Mandela received before his swearing-in ceremony was Israeli President Ezer Weizman, in a public gesture of conciliation. They called in Mr. Arafat and reiterated his support of the Middle East peace process.

Although Israel was always officially opposed to apartheid, it maintained close ties to South Africa even when Pretoria was ostracised because of its policies of racial discrimination.

Change came with the dramatic announcement of mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO last year, followed by a series of peace agreements now being implemented. This opened a

way for a thaw in the ANC's relations with the Jewish state, ahead of the historic change of government in South Africa.

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Change came with the dramatic announcement of mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO last year, followed by a series of peace agreements now being implemented. This opened a

tween the countries last year totalled more than \$250 million in South African exports to Israel, and \$120 million in the other direction.

Western analysts have estimated the value of the arms trade between the countries at hundreds of millions of dollars — far more than the official figure of \$300 million.

Israel followed the West in imposing economic, military and cultural sanctions on South Africa in 1987, then lifted the restrictions in 1992 as Pretoria moved to dismantle apartheid.

"They were amazed at the struggle in Israel was not over colour," she said. "They thought all Jews were white and Arabs dark. When they saw there were Jews who look like Arabs they were amazed. They were also surprised not all Jews were rich."

South Africa's 100,000 Jews are largely affluent.

Mr. Mandella has called on the Jews to stay and contribute their professional expertise to building a new South Africa. But the community has already been depleted by the migration of 18,000 to Israel over the years, and tens of thousands to other countries, according to Israeli immigration officials.

NATO takes gamble with special offer to Russia

By Nicholas Doughty
Reuter

BRUSSELS — NATO has taken a gamble with a plan to offer Russia a special relationship in addition to the "Partnership for Peace" scheme in an attempt to keep faltering post-cold war cooperation with Moscow on track.

Diplomats say the idea, agreed in principle by NATO ambassadors last week, may well upset Eastern European states which were once Moscow's satellites and are now highly sensitive to any perceived Russian influence over their affairs.

In addition, any special relationship may not go far enough to soothe Russian concerns that it is being increasingly ignored by the West despite its status as a major nuclear-armed world power and key member of the U.N. Security Council. "We're walking a tight

rope with this and everyone knows it," said one alliance diplomat, who asked not to be identified.

NATO still wants Russia to sign the "Partnership for Peace" scheme for closer military links which is on offer to all former Soviet republics and Eastern European states.

Russia has made clear it wants a special relationship with NATO to reflect the fact that it is the world's biggest nuclear power and a key member of the U.N. Security Council.

Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev was Tuesday scheduled to present Moscow's ideas on this to NATO defence minister in Brussels.

NATO, keen to avoid further confusion with Moscow over the partnership scheme, has now agreed its basic approach to Russia.

"We have to be careful to take Russian views into account but we cannot afford any perception that they have more influence over how we do business than anyone

else," said another alliance diplomat.

The irony is that "Partnership for Peace" was designed partly to ease Russian fears that NATO would expand rapidly eastwards, taking in countries such as Poland and Hungary which are eager to join.

The partnership contains no offer of membership or security guarantees, although many Eastern European states see it as a vital first step on the road to joining NATO.

While NATO is keen to do something more for Russia, it is sensitive to charges that it might bow to pressure from Moscow.

As a result, NATO diplomats say the alliance is keen to avoid phrases like "special partnership" which might imply that Moscow had a relationship with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation that would exclude Eastern European states.

LETTERS

Social borders

To the Editor:

I AM an American student at the University of Jordan. I am writing to convey some of my impressions concerning the subject of sex in Jordan and the Middle East. I wish to relate a couple of incidents that have occurred over the past two weeks to illustrate my point.

Last weekend, two female friends and I made the trek to Hammamat Ma'in to rest from a week of study and enjoy a dip in the warm spring water. From the moment we arrived, we were tracked by packs of young men. Even when I requested that they respect the women's privacy just as they would an Arab woman's, they persisted in walking back and forth past the private place we had staked out for ourselves. I was incensed, knowing as I did that no Arab man would tolerate behaviour even a tenth so lascivious directed toward his own wife, sisters or daughters. For upwards of an hour, I begged them repeatedly to respect our desire to be left alone. A few of the older fellows finally took my words to heart and cleared out, but the rest continued to circle around. I finally had to grab one of the boys and shake him and threaten him before they all slowly made their way back up the river to where they had all been before we arrived. But not before they had taken an ample opportunity to mock my foreign accent and laugh at my inability to maintain my composure under the burden of their inhospitable conduct.

Two days later, I was down on University Avenue with my girlfriend. We were on our way to the university, but had sat down a little off to the side in the most private place we could find in order to discuss a particularly sad and difficult loss we were dealing with that affected us both to the extent that we found it difficult to continue on our way until we had talked it over a little. Three students came to where we were and, in the most somber tones they could muster, asked if they might speak to me a moment in private. No matter that we were both in tears and that the least they could do if they felt compelled to interfere with an obviously private conversation was to offer to inform me that it was not only wrong to hold hands in public in Jordan, but that it was also illegal and that we could be arrested for it. Eager as I was not to offend, I quickly apologised and attempted to explain that we had a particularly pressing problem that demanded our attention and that I had simply forgotten to be a little more circumspect, understanding as I did the importance of respecting the more conservative nature of Jordanian society. The self-appointed spokesman, however, merely waved his hand in front of his face and walked on.

These two events demonstrate what happens when sex is repressed in a given society to the point that it becomes simultaneously the most enticing and the most revolting act imaginable. Teenage boys and even grown men torture themselves in the attempt to rid their bodies of this natural desire, or else they become so consumed by it that they spend their every waking hour plotting ways to seduce women. Others parade around preaching against any contact between men and women, thus eliminating from the human experience the natural interaction between boys and girls by which personalities are formed and lessons are learned that will help one to have self-confidence and sufficient knowledge of the world to be successful in life.

Does it have to be this way? No! Children can be brought up to know that love and sex and friendship are three distinct concepts. They can learn that love coupled with true friendship creates some of the most fulfilling moments of a lifetime. But this won't happen as long as public interaction between males and females is deemed unacceptable.

It is not my intention to claim that my own country has a monopoly on solutions to problems. In Washington, D.C., where I live, more people (approximately twice as many) have been murdered since the beginning of the Intifada than in the occupied territories. Teenage pregnancies abound, and abortion is often viewed as the most convenient form of birth control. However, I am certain that the number of teenage pregnancies would be much higher if girls there were raised as potential victims like many girls here are. And as for drugs, the primary cause of homicides in large U.S. cities, that is a difficult problem that is only becoming worse throughout the world. As tempting as it might seem to simply execute drug dealers, it seems that the more rational response is to teach children (and adults) about the adverse effects that drugs can have on their lives and encourage them to resist the temptation to indulge. After all, a drug dealer is only as dangerous as his clientele will allow him to be. And if there is no demand for drugs, then the dealer will have no means to purchase them since competition is scant in a business that makes no money.

This seeming diversion into the topic of how best to solve the drug problem does have relevance for the purposes of my discussion. For I would similarly suggest that instead of prohibiting contact between males and females and refusing to talk openly to teenagers about the dangers of unprotected sex, it would make more sense to simply teach them the importance of placing limits on their behaviour and let them make their own decisions. In Provo, Utah, the mid-sized Western U.S. city where I grew up, the prevailing religion of the region (Mormonism) taught us that we should "learn correct principles and govern ourselves." As a result, one girl out of my graduating class of several hundred students became pregnant out of wedlock. Unfortunately, she was shunned by some and gossiped about by others, but since Western culture deals with this phenomenon so differently, there was never any danger she would lose her life. In fact, there was little chance of her being rejected by her family. She married the man who was responsible for her pregnancy and, as far as I know, they are still together today. So instead of capitulating into a catastrophe, a tragedy was transformed into a reasonably tolerable situation. And while the more ideal situation (both for the child and the parents) would have been to conceive a child within the bonds of marriage, I find it laudable that the concerned persons could find a way to make things work in the aftermath of what is a relatively rare yet sometimes unavoidable incident.

Both women and men have much to gain by relaxing the practice of segregating the sexes. Women will have the world opened to them. Of course, with this new freedom will come risks, but with adequate training, they will be much better equipped to face these risks. Men, if allowed to get to know women in dating relationships, will spend less time obsessing about sex and, doubtlessly, accomplish much more with their lives. This experience will better prepare both men and women to make a suitable choice for a mate when the time comes that they wish to marry. And in addition, they will be less lonely during their adolescent and young-adult years, years which should be among a person's happiest but which are too often filled with loneliness and lack of fulfillment due to the difficulties of finding the intimate friendship that all human beings long for.

David Harris,
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Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Making a difference

Assured that the guns are silent, Croatians bring back life to their villages

Following is the second and last part of a report that Jordan Times Staff Reporter Ica Wahbeh filed after visiting Jordanian peacekeepers in Croatia earlier this month. The first part appeared on Saturday.

At about 45 km northwest of Lovinac, there is a mechanised infantry platoon (around 30 soldiers) in the village of Berlet. The road leading to it, when not full of stones, is full of crater-like holes left by mines defused by the Canadian sappers. Riding on it and avoiding overturning is proof of mastery.

And here, in Berlet, I am to have the most scary adventure of my visit to Croatia: Going after mines.

Capt. Marwan Maqableh, the company commander in the village, is telling us how only 10 minutes earlier an anti-tank mine had exploded about 800 metres away, rippling through a deserted Croatian house. The bomb, he assumes, was triggered off by some grazing animal.

The width of the separation zone between Croats, west of the camp, and Serbs, east of it, is two kilometres. "Our mission is to forbid any party from entering the area, to collect information, to provide the local inhabitants with humanitarian help, to accompany the UNPROFOR caravans and to directly report to the Lovinac headquarters" Capt. Maqableh says.

And then, more confidently: "There are some anti-personnel and anti-tank mines on the road if you want to see them."

Accompanied by head of our delegation Col. Shobak, a photographer, the daring captain and the Jeep driver, I go mine-bunting — not the most responsible thing ever.

The Croats are very near and we have to ride the blue-flagged car for our own good. Not for long though, as the stems of two mortar missiles unexploded on impact are showing on the road drowned in unchecked vegetation. The rest is done on foot. It is the longest stretch of land I have covered in my life, all the 850 metres of it. Nobody talking any more. After reaching the two anti-tank mines the captain knew about and photographing them as well, we have to return.

The way back is not to be any easier. The car is going in reverse on the narrow street bordered by mines. Not an easy task when the saloon is done among bombs. With infinite precaution and manoeuvres the driver eventually turns the Jeep to face the road and the rest of the distance is covered with signs of relief.

The Medak pocket, once one of the most dangerous areas in Sector South and not exactly benign now, is exuding an air of eeriness. Nothing is stirring in the balmy, sunny atmosphere. It could have been a perfect place for a picnic in times of peace.



The toll of war: a blown up house in the Medak pocket (photo by Ica Wahbeh)

French, who number 5,000.

There are around 30 nationalities working as peacekeepers, international monitors and civilian police.

In Lovinac, I have the chance to talk to Ayman Badawi, from Civpol (civilian police). The 21-year-old had already six years experience with the Jordanian army before going to Croatia where he has been for almost one year, he is responsible for coordinating between local police and UNPROFOR, for ensuring humanitarian help in cooperation with UNPROFOR and local people, for investigating crimes and reporting them to the headquarters, for coordinating meetings between Jordat and local police, the UNCHR and for communication — for people who cannot communicate with their families — patrolling with Jordat and local police the separation zone and acting as liaison officer between the local police and Jordat and Canbat (the Canadian battalion).

"At the beginning I had

trouble adapting myself. The local language was difficult and unusual. Nobody spoke English, so I learnt their language. Now I live with the local people and I understand them. I do not need any interpreter to go with me."

Capt. Mozamel Karaki, 28, had served for nine years with the Jordanian army before going to Croatia where he works as an information officer. His duty includes reconnaissance, follow-up and making sure the U.N. resolutions are implemented, marking on maps, knowing the terrain.

"It was difficult to be abroad and see completely different things from what one would normally see, especially the destruction."

Now our peacekeepers seem to have perfectly adapted to the situation, which they are supposed to keep under control.

Deputy sector commander for Sector South, Col. Morton, from Canada, is having lunch at the Jordanian company headquarters as we are visiting.

"I have one big problem with the Jordanians," he says jokingly. "They never let me go without eating with them first."

Based at the headquarters in Knin, the capital of the Serb-held Krajina, Col. Morton moves daily around,

when it comes to former Yugoslavia: "Is the U.N. presence really making a difference?"

A brick wall built at the very entrance to the UNPROFOR headquarters in Zagreb, having on each brick the name of a person missing

about UNPROFOR.

"We are not here to fight, create problems or put pressure on one side or another. We are here to keep peace. We do not impose ourselves or our will on any party. We try to let them decide without pressure. Things do not always go smooth. Soldiers face difficulties and dangers. But we strive to succeed in our mission."

UNPROFOR's fourth Force Commander, Lieutenant-General Bertrand de Lapresle, of France, believes there is "a lot of improvement" regarding military action in Croatia. "Militarily we are achieving what is asked of us. The situation is calming down, but peace will come only from the parties who are doing the fighting."

Regarding the Kingdom's contribution, Gen. de Lapresle is "glad, happy, proud of the Jordanian contingent."

"I appreciate the special capacity and the flexibility of the Jordanian forces. I would like that all my divisions were as cooperative."

"We are not here to fight, create problems or put pressure on one side or another. We are here to keep peace" — Major General Ghazi Tayyeb, commander, Croatia Command

attends negotiations as mediator between the two sides and makes sure "there are no gaps and we have a complete domination of the zone."

"We get along very well with the Jordanians. They cooperate and are professionals," says the colonel.

Making a difference

A question is often asked

in this genocidal war, seems to be a snub to the peacekeepers' efforts.

U.N. secretary general's special envoy to former Yugoslavia, Yasushi Akashi, admits the mission is not "one hundred per cent a success."

But from the way ceasefire is maintained in Croatia and from talking to people on

Sanaa puts out feelers

(Continued from page 1)

After a night of heavy shelling on the Zingbar front northeast of Aden, the area was quiet on Saturday and southern soldiers appeared relaxed.

"There are a number of foreign pilots and military experts at Hodeida air base now," he said, without giving the nationality of the pilots.

In Cairo, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa asked the U.N. Security Council to arrange a cease-fire and said five other Arab countries are working with Egypt on a proposed council resolution to end the fighting.

In Gaza, meanwhile, the Palestinian self-rule authority pledged to arrest and try the killers of two Palestinians alleged to have collaborated with Israel, a senior security official said Saturday.

Hamas said it killed the two men on Friday.

Mohammad Dahlan, Palestinian preventive security chief, said those responsible for the killings would be "dealt with by the Palestinian authority through legal measures."

"We will arrest them and put them on trial," he said.

The deaths are the first reported killings of collaborators since the May 4 agreement between the PLO and Israel.

Palestinian police attended the funerals of the two men and launched an investigation into the deaths.

On the western front southern forces repelled a northern attack this week and the northerners fell back towards the former north-south border area of Bab Al Mandeb, some 100 kilometres from Aden, southern officials said.

The southern air force, which has dominated the skies, is still flying out of Aden. Mr. Tammam said it was bombing northern supply lines.

"They have failed in their attacks on all fronts and have switched to defending the ground they have gained," he said.

Official southern sources said northern units were preparing to move on the oil-producing region of Hadhramaut.

U.N.-Iraq talks

(Continued from page 1)

it is realistic to expect the sanctions against Iraq to be modified this year.

But other members of the Security Council, notably China, France and Russia, lured by promises of big contracts by Iraq, have argued that the sanctions should be eased.

Kingdom to hold

(Continued from page 1)

The top Foreign Ministry official, who arrived here from Syria, said Damascus was ready for making real progress in its negotiations with Israel.

Expressing optimism that the peace process would move forward, the Russian envoy said that this would require big

Government to pursue

(Continued from page 1)

take in new companies which would issue the compulsory accident insurance policies."

"The cabinet did not agree to the 150 per cent increase without a supporting study especially that it would affect drivers of about 200,000 cars," Ms. Khalaf pointed out.

"We could not adopt the second option because traditionally insurance companies were making up for their losses from the compulsory accident insurance policies by expanding their profit margin on the comprehensive accident coverage policies and if we allow them to pull out from the losing one they would be making net profits by only issuing comprehensive policies," Ms. Khalaf detailed.

"The government was left with the option of proposing an amendment to the insurance companies law, which would open the market to new companies and would lift the issuing of comprehensive accident insurance policies with issuing the compulsory insur-

ance policy," Ms. Khalaf concluded.

She said the ministry's studies have shown that the losses incurred by the insurance companies as a result of the compulsory insurance were 52 per cent, of which about 26 per cent were covered from the profits made of insuring temporarily admitted vehicles.

"The net losses incurred by the insurance companies is actually 26 per cent," which is a far cry from the originally proposed 15 per cent.

A delegation from Hamas was due in Tunis this weekend.

Although the group has openly rejected the self-rule accord and vowed to wreck it, it has held secret contacts with Mr. Arafat and demanded five national authority seats. Mr. Arafat offered only two, the sources said.

The spokesman said the document set out the authority's aims until elections in October for an autonomy council to run the autonomous areas of Gaza and Jericho for a five-year interim period as set out under the May 4 Israel-PLO autonomy accord.

The authority also made 14 appointments to its "cabinet" in talks which began Friday at the PLO headquarters in Tunis and are due to continue until Sunday. Mr. Abed Rabbo said one of

PLO hands out portfolios

(Continued from page 1)

National Authority.

PLO sources said he dispatched Abbas Zaki, a member of the Central Committee of Fatah, to Damascus Saturday for consultations with Mr. Arafat's Faieh, to join the self-rule government, which Mr. Arafat will head.

The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Mr. Zaki would try to convince the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the second largest faction after Mr. Arafat's Faieh, to join the self-rule government, which Mr. Arafat will head.

The Marxist PFLP, headed by veteran guerrilla leader George Habash, has opposed the PLO-Israeli autonomy accord.

But its leadership reportedly was contemplating joining the authority to pursue its opposition to Mr. Arafat's policy from within the emerging political system in the Palestinian entity.

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PLO spokesman Yasser Abed Rabbo addresses the press Saturday from the organisation's headquarters in Tunis (AFP photo)

the main goals of the new Palestinian Authority will be to win back all the territory occupied by Israel since 1967, including East Jerusalem.

The authority's objectives are set out in its first political programme, still to be ratified by the Executive Committee.

Mr. Abed Rabbo said it reiterated the Palestinians' position on Jerusalem, which is considered "an integral part of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967" when Israel also seized the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

He said the authority would be to arrest and try the killers of two Palestinians alleged to have collaborated with Israel, a senior security official said Saturday.

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"We will arrest them and put them on trial," he said.

The deaths are the first reported killings of collaborators since the May 4 agreement between the PLO and Israel.

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sisted, preventing the integration of the two armed forces, intelligence agencies and bureaucracies.

Mr. Saleh alleges that Mr. Beidh is on the run and plans to set up a state of "greater Hadhramaut" with Saudi backing in the eastern provinces, which account for about half Yemen's daily oil output of 300,000 barrels.

In Cairo, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa asked the U.N. Security Council to arrange a cease-fire and said five other Arab countries are working with Egypt on a proposed council resolution to end the fighting.

In Gaza, meanwhile, the Palestinian self-rule authority pledged to arrest and try the killers of two Palestinians alleged to have collaborated with Israel, a senior security official said Saturday.

It gave no source for its report on casualties from the attack, the second Scud to have caused casualties in the capital.

Officials bad said the missile which hit a densely populated residential area killed 13 people and wounded more than 100.

Thousands turned out for the funeral of nine of the victims and officials said four others were buried by their families.

Meanwhile, the man appointed vice-president of South Yemen said in a newspaper interview Saturday that foreign pilots were fighting on the side of the northern troops.

"There are indications and confirmed information of the involvement of foreign parties in the conflict" Abdul Rahman Al Sharq Al Awsat newspaper.

"There are a number of foreign pilots and military experts at Hodeida air base now," he said, without giving the nationality of the pilots.

Mr. Musa said "what is important now is a ceasefire, because this is in the Arab and Yemeni interest."

Mr. Saleh has rejected any international or Arab interference.

King Fahd of Saudi Arabia met Friday with three southern leaders, including Heidar Abu Baker Al Attas, Aden's prime minister designate.

The official Saudi Press Agency said King Fahd also received a telephone call from Mr. Saleh, but gave no details.

On the battlefields a tense lull punctuated only by sporadic shelling appeared to have held on fronts around Aden.

The southerners appeared content to defend Aden against an army almost twice as large as their own. Officers said they had been ordered to defend their positions and not attack.

"With each day that passes they lose a little bit, and time is on our side," said southern Brigadier Saleh Tammam, speaking at a front line 43 kilometres north of Aden's outskirts.

Yemen war leads to economic turmoil

SANA (R) — Three weeks into war between the Sanaa government and southern secessionists, Yemen is a country in economic turmoil, largely cut off from the outside world.

Fighting and fuel shortages have disrupted trade. Tens and possibly hundreds of thousands of people have abandoned their villages and their crops. The war's political crisis before the war had already put the brakes on government activity.

The postal service has collapsed, few people have access to overseas telephone lines and flights in and out of Sanaa airport are expensive and sporadic.

As the business community and its service went back to work, a day after a nine-day holidy of the Muslim feast of Eid al-Adha, the economic future of this minor oil-producing country did not look bright.

"It hasn't shown through yet but in the long term the costs of this war are going to be devastating, whoever wins or loses," a European ambassador said.

The Sanaa government had hoped for a quick victory over southerners headed by Ali Salem Al Beidi, leader of the party which ruled South Yemen until union with the north in 1990.

But a northern offensive to-

wards the southern capital Aden seems to have run out of steam. In some places the southerners have pushed the northerners back to where they were a week ago.

The fighting has so far done little damage to the country's infrastructure but the damage to Yemen's reputation will take years to undo, even if the war ends tomorrow, diplomats say.

"Yemen had much in its favour. It was a haven of democracy in the Arab World, foreign donors were very sympathetic and oil revenues gave the government a chance to put its house in order," said a banker who asked not to be named.

Now many foreign companies in the oil industry, the main area of foreign investment, are looking for ways to back out.

"What with kidnappings, hijackings, corruption, bureaucracy and horrendous labour problems, it was never an easy environment to work in. For many of us, the war's the last straw," said an oil supply company executive.

The main incentive to stay is the fear of losing their investments, which in the oil industry can run into tens of millions of dollars worth of equipment, he added.

Yemen Hunt and Canadian Occidental (Canox), which

operate the main fields in the north and the south, are keeping their fingers crossed that the armies will not hit their installations and that war will end soon.

Canox says it expects a full 40 per cent of its cash flow this year to come from Yemen and at last report said there had been no impact on its production of some 159,000 barrels a day from its Masila field.

But for development agencies, which have little to gain from operations in Yemen, insecurity is beginning to take its toll.

The Netherlands, which has had two development workers held hostage east of Sanaa for more than two months, is seriously considering calling off its aid programme, diplomats said.

Bankers said Yemenis were equally cautious about investing or doing business. Some have cancelled pre-war letters of credit because they cannot be sure that their goods will arrive safely or that they will find customers to buy them, they say.

Insurance companies have imposed high premiums for ships at Hodeida on the Red Sea, the main port for trade with the north.

The effects are not yet evident in the form of shortages and the Yemeni rival has not

fallen sharply, partly because there is little demand for dollars from importers and travellers.

Official economic statistics are hopelessly out of date but foreign economists said that at the start of the war the central bank had foreign reserves equivalent to about two months of imports, below the level usually thought safe.

Planning Minister Abdul Karim Al Iryani, asked if the government was buying weapons, said: "We don't have any money."

The country has a foreign debt of more than \$7 billion, about equal to annual gross domestic product (GDP) — the value of what a country produces. For the 13 million Yemenis, per capita GDP is about \$600.

Economists say the government has been repaying only debts to creditors who are prepared to provide new soft loans. The war, widely seen as a rash pre-emptive strike by President Ali Abdullah Saleh, has reduced the chances of Western governments writing off some of the debts, they say.

President Saleh has staked his reputation on victory, saying that it was worth paying a high price for Yemeni unity, even to the cost of thousands of martyrs.

Mazda loses \$428m; Mitsubishi income halved

TOKYO (AFP) — Mazda Motor Corp. announced a pre-tax loss of 44.1 billion yen (\$428 million) and its bigger rival Mitsubishi Motors Corp. said group earnings were more than halved to 21.3 billion yen.

Daihatsu Motor Corp., Ltd, a minicar maker affiliated with Toyota Motor Corp., meanwhile reversed its losses with a pre-tax profit of 2.4 billion yen, saying the return to the black reflected cost-cutting efforts.

Mazda, which forecast another two years of losses including 33 billion yen this year, also cut its year-end dividend, blaming the loss on a 19.3 per cent plunge in sales to 1,187 billion yen and sales of parts and components for overseas production were down 15.9 per cent at 156 billion yen.

Mazda sales volumes sagged 20 per cent to 1,008,992 units, depressed by a 23.2 per cent slump in exports to 614,038 units, domestic sales were down 14.5 per cent at 394,954 units. Overall car sales fell by 17.5 per cent to 837,700 units and sales of commercial vehicles tumbled 30.6 per cent to 171,292 units.

Mitsubishi said its group pre-tax earnings plunged 57.7 per cent from a year earlier to 21.3 billion yen. Suffering from a slump in exports as a result of the stronger yen, it said worldwide sales fell 7.3 per cent to 2,947 billion yen with operating profit dropping 47.1 per cent to 40.8 billion yen.

The company, which gave no group forecast for the current year, projected lower parent company earnings of 13 billion following a 24.1 per cent decline to 35.4 billion yen in the latest year. But parent sales were forecast to increase to 2,520 billion yen after falling 6.1 per cent to 2,456 billion yen a year earlier.

Considering the continuing severe operating environment, Mazda will accelerate its efforts to improve Mazda's financial strength in order to achieve profitability even during periods of slow market growth," he said.

Mazda, which is 24.5 per cent-owned by Ford Motor Co. of the United States, said overall sales were expected to recover to 1,840 billion yen this

year despite the projection for continued losses.

In the latest year, export revenue fell by 21.2 per cent to 1,068 billion yen while domestic revenue fell 16.1 per cent to 701 billion yen.

Overall sales of motor vehicles alone fell by 22.4 per cent from the figure a year earlier to 1,187 billion yen and sales of parts and components for overseas production were down 15.9 per cent at 156 billion yen.

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The company, which gave no group forecast for the current year, projected lower parent company earnings of 13 billion following a 24.1 per cent decline to 35.4 billion yen in the latest year. But parent sales were forecast to increase to 2,520 billion yen after falling 6.1 per cent to 2,456 billion yen a year earlier.

Considering the continuing severe operating environment, Mazda will accelerate its efforts to improve Mazda's financial strength in order to achieve profitability even during periods of slow market growth," he said.

Mazda, which is 24.5 per cent-owned by Ford Motor Co. of the United States, said overall sales were expected to recover to 1,840 billion yen this

year despite the projection for continued losses.

In the latest year, export revenue fell by 21.2 per cent to 1,068 billion yen while domestic revenue fell 16.1 per cent to 701 billion yen.

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Economy

Egypt budget boosts spending, trims deficit

CAIRO (R) — The Egyptian government has presented its 1994/95 budget to parliament, proposing to boost expenditure by 7.9 per cent to 70.5 billion Egyptian pounds (\$20.9 billion).

The budget, presented to parliament Saturday, also foresees a small reduction in the deficit to 8.6 billion pounds (\$2.5 billion) from 8.9 billion pounds (\$2.64 billion) in 1993/94.

The budget appeared broadly in line with International Monetary Fund (IMF) deficit targets of 3.5 per cent of gross domestic product.

The budget included food subsidies of 3.9 billion pounds (\$1.15 billion) on essentials such as bread, the staple of

millions of poor Egyptians. Egyptian economists expect a rise in prices of fuel and electricity in July, as advised by the IMF, but the government has made no announcement yet.

The budget allocated 17.4 billion pounds (\$5.16 billion) for government wages, an increase of 50 per cent from the previous year.

Egypt's armed forces, among the largest and best-equipped in the Middle East, will get a 15 per cent increase in funds to 6.2 billion pounds (\$1.8 billion).

To narrow the deficit, the government will boost tax and customs revenues. The new budget envisages tax collec-

tions of 16.3 billion pounds (\$4.8 billion) compared to 15 billion pounds (\$4.45 billion). Officials said they hoped to reduce inflation, which has averaged about seven per cent this year, to between three and five per cent by the end of 1995.

Egypt, the most populous Arab state with 60 million people, imports about two thirds of its food.

One of its main foreign currency earners, tourism, has been hit by attacks by Muslim militants. The new budget said revenues were expected to drop from 8.4 billion pounds (\$2.4 billion) to 7.14 billion pounds (\$2.1 billion) in 1994/95.

The budget, which caps a series of efforts to curb imports, requires all foreign purchases to be ordered instead through the country's state banking system, the central bank said.

The new measure, which caps imports, requires all foreign purchases to be ordered instead through the country's state banking system, the central bank said.

In the past two months, the ministry has been authorising the release of imported goods only if the owner deposited an equal amount of cash at the bank.

These restrictions, often costly and time-consuming, had so far applied only to state companies, while private importers could still turn to the open market for their hard currency.

The latest measure is designed to further tighten imports, which have dropped from \$23 billion in 1992 to \$7 billion last year, according to official figures.

The restrictions on imports have been adopted to curb private demand for hard currency and enable the government to repay some \$30 billion in short and medium-term foreign debts.

The fall in imports also came as Iran's trade partners refused to honour Iranian letters of credit after the country came up with a payment arrears of some \$13 billion.

Iran has since managed to reschedule or refinance some \$7 billion of its debts, but it will have to pay the trade partners from \$4 to \$5 billion by the year 2000.

Oil exports have enabled the sultanate and other Gulf producers to record persistent surpluses in their trade balances. But a sharp decline in oil prices over the past years has turned a surplus in their budgets into a deficit.

Iran imposes new restrictions on imports

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran

Arabs urged to set up gas supply network

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab states should set up a network to supply natural gas to local consumers to face growing demand as most regional states switch to the cleaner source of energy, an Arab official said Friday.

The network, linking major Arab gas producers to other members of the Arab League, could later be extended to countries outside the region, said Mohammad Lababidi, director of the technical department at the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC).

"Arab states lack an integrated network to transport gas to each other. They should move to build a network similar to the network which links European countries," he told the United Arab Emirates (UAE) magazine Al Shurouq.

"Such a network will ensure enough gas supplies to non-producing Arab countries for use in factories and electricity stations as well as in setting up petrochemical and fertilizer industries," he explained.

Mr. Lababidi said introducing gas in running power stations in the 22-member Arab League would enable them to press ahead with a multi-billion-dollar project to link their electricity grids.

The network would also boost inter-Arab trade as gas producers could barter natural gas for farm and industrial products from such beneficiaries as Egypt, Syria, Jordan,

Dubai, Bahrain, Oman and Libya.

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The Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) and other Arab

Arab fund hit by deepening arrears problem

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), the main official lending institution in the region, said Saturday its problem of arrears was worsening with Iraq and other member states unable to pay back loans.

The AMF was created by the Arab League in Abu Dhabi in 1976 with the primary aim of tackling its 22-members' balance of payments deficits. But the problem has persisted despite loans totalling nearly \$2.4 billion.

The growth covered most member states, with Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil producer and exporter, remaining the biggest gas consumer. Its demand increased to 485,000 equivalent BPD in 1992 from 385 equivalent BPD in 1988.

Arab states have around

28.7 trillion cubic metres

(956.6 trillion cubic feet)

of natural gas, nearly 21 per cent

of the total world gas reserves.

The bulk of the Arab reserves

are based in Algeria, Qatar

and the UAE.

Gas production stood at 294

billion cubic metres

(9.8 trillion cubic feet)

in 1992, most of

which is exported to Japan and Europe.

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N. Korea rejects IAEA proposals

VIENNA (R) — North Korea rejected all proposals by the U.N. nuclear safeguards agency for taking samples from a reactor to verify whether it had been used as a source for nuclear arms fuel, the agency said Saturday.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), admitting failure in its talks, said the North Koreans had held fast on their "unique status" — a formula by which they can pick and choose which international safeguards measures to respect.

North Korea "rejected all IAEA proposals... to select, segregate and secure fuel rods for later measurements so as to be able to verify the history of the reactor core, specifically to verify whether this is the first core," the IAEA said.

North Korea "continued to maintain that in view of its 'unique status' it could not accept the IAEA verification measures proposed," the statement added.

The agency said its inspectors rejected a counter-proposal by the North Koreans because it would not have allowed them to verify the history of the reactor core.

The five-megawatt reactor at Yongbyon, where defuelling and refuelling of radioactive rods is now in progress, went into service in 1986. But it was shut down for 100 days in 1989, giving North Korea a theoretical opportunity to take out plutonium-laden rods for bomb-making. Pyongyang denies this.

U.N. nuclear inspectors left North Korea Saturday after a five-day visit in which they

failed to persuade the Communist government to let them monitor refuelling of the nuclear reactor, Pyongyang's official news agency reported.

"The negotiating delegation of the International Atomic Energy Agency headed by Demetrios Perricos, director of the Division of Operation of the Safeguards Department of the agency... left here today by plane," said the Korea Central News Agency, monitored in Tokyo.

The South Korean government said Saturday North Korea was heading for a confrontation with the West by preventing U.N. inspectors from properly analysing spent fuel from its nuclear reactor.

"North Korea is close to crossing the line and the situation may demand a confrontation with Pyongyang," a Foreign Ministry official told the domestic Yonhap News Agency.

Talks in Pyongyang between U.N. nuclear inspectors and North Korea produced no agreement, heightening suspicions of a clandestine weapons programme, ministry officials said.

North Korea said Saturday that it would not suspend the refuelling of a nuclear reactor to let the U.S. inspectors test spent fuel.

"They (inspectors) are demanding the selected separation of fuel rods and sampling... we can never allow this under the present condition, no matter what others say and what counter-action they may take," said the official North Korean daily Rodong Sinmun.

The development created a flurry among Security Council members in New York. The council is considering a

statement or a resolution that might not threaten economic sanctions but would imply that the Council was taking up the issue shortly again.

Mr. Blix, whose team was returning to Vienna Saturday, said he was leaving two inspectors behind to report "further on the situation." He said fuel was being discharged at a "very fast pace" which was not dictated by safety considerations.

Spent fuel rods being removed from the reactor could hold vital evidence as to whether the Communist government has diverted plutonium to develop a nuclear bomb.

"The ministry is discussing steps to cope with the new situation which is very discouraging," a ministry official said.

Meanwhile, North Korea is preparing to test-fire a missile, Japanese dailies reported Saturday.

Quoting an unnamed Japanese Foreign Ministry official, the Tokyo Shimbun said Japan had received information from the United States that North Korea was preparing for a test launch.

The official believes the missile would be an improved version of the Rodong-1 missile, based on the Soviet Scud design used by Iraq in the 1991 Gulf war, the daily said.

The Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper quoted an unnamed military source in Tokyo as saying a U.S. spy satellite spotted a week ago crane trucks for test-firing on a North Korean missile base and monitoring vessels at a port facing the sea of Japan.

U.N. protests Bosnian army deployment

SARAJEVO (R) — U.N. peacekeepers protested Saturday after finding Bosnian government troops deployed illegally in the military excision zone around Sarajevo and rival forces skirmished in artillery duels.

Rob Annink, spokesman for the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), said 100 soldiers of the Muslim-led Bosnian army were found in the zone on Mount Igman Friday.

A strong protest against the violation was being lodged with the Muslim command, he added.

Artillery exchanges involving Serb, Muslim and Croat forces were reported in northern Bosnia.

Bosnian Serbs blamed the Croat HVO militia for a shelling incident at Brcko on the Bosnian border with Croatia in which a civilian was killed and three people were seriously wounded on Saturday morning.

Fighting between Muslim and Serb fighters was reported on the edges of the Muslim Tuzla enclave in the north.

Leaders of the warring factions accused each other of blocking progress in internationally mediated peace talks.

Momcilo Krajisnik, head of the Bosnian Serb delegation to peace negotiations in the French town of Talloires, said they had not brought the factions closer together.

The Bosnian Serb News Agency (SRNA) quoted him as saying that Western and Russian officials, who hosted the meeting Wednesday and Thursday, would have a difficult task finding a concrete solution.

Prime Minister Haris Sila-

jdic of Bosnia's Muslim-led government gave a similarly pessimistic assessment.

"We haven't achieved much," he told Sarajevo Radio. "Our delegation has performed responsibility, but the aggressor (Serb) side was not cooperative. They stuck by their same positions."

The Serbs further accused the Muslims of making "megamaniac demands" for territory and Mr. Krajisnik, speaker of the self-styled Bosnian Serb parliament, told Bosnian Serb Television that "nothing qualitatively new was achieved."

He added: "The differences between the two sides are considerable and great efforts are needed for a final solution to be reached because the Muslim side is persistently making its stand more radical, insisting on the war option."

International mediators want a solution under which the Serbs would have 49 per cent of Bosnia's land area and the Muslims and Croats, now allied in a federation, would have 51 per cent. The Serbs now control 70 per cent of Bosnian territory.

Despite the pessimism of the Muslim and Serb leaders, French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe said a solution to the two-year-long conflict was within reach.

He said international mediators were seeking to impose a ceasefire, set Bosnia's borders, establish governing institutions and begin rebuilding the former Yugoslav republic.

"We are at a crucial stage," Mr. Juppe told Radio France Internationale (RFI). "I think the coming weeks between now and July will be decisive."

Sarajevo Radio said the

values are offended by human misery, and we should not," he said.

"But we are prepared to defend ourselves and our fundamental interests when they are threatened. We'll do so on our own whenever necessary, and we'll act with others whenever that is possible and prudent," Mr. Clinton said.

Mr. Clinton's father, William Blythe, fought in the North Africa and Italian campaigns during World War II. Mr. Clinton avoided the Vietnam War draft and protested the war from Oxford University, where he will receive a doctorate degree of civil law on June 8, the last stop of his trip.

Mr. Clinton said Americans should remember that those who stormed the beaches in France and Italy 50 years ago had no guarantee of survival. "They had no guarantees, but they went on against gunfire, under shelling, over land mines — against all they ploughed ahead. And they knew that unless their prevailed, our very way of life might be lost," he said.

He said it was the current generation's obligation to make sure D-Day will never be necessary again.

"Working together with American leadership we can do that," he said. "We can resist tyranny. We can combat

terrorism and contain chaos. We can work for peace, for progress on human rights."

The White House said Friday that French people who have memories of D-Day 50 years ago may share them with President Clinton via computer.

A White House statement said French citizens with access to Minitel computer terminals may take advantage of services offered by French television networks TF-1 and France 2.

Both Minitel services will be available in France on the Minitel network access Number 3615. TF-1's service is accessible by Minitel access code ETE44 (number 44) and France 2 by code JUIN44 (June 44).

The messages will be read and translated by American volunteers in Paris and sent back to the White House via fax," the White House said.

This is an extension of the capabilities offered to U.S. citizens over the Internet and commercial on-line service providers in the United States.

More than 200,000 electronic mail messages have been received by Mr. Clinton and Vice President Al Gore since the service was opened in June 1993.

There are an estimated six million Minitels in France.

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Yeltsin welcomes Solzhenitsyn back to Russia

VLADIVOSTOK, Russia (Agencies) — President Boris Yeltsin Saturday welcomed Alexander Solzhenitsyn on his return to Russia after 20 years' exile and said the author could play a significant role in reshaping the country.

"You are returning home in difficult, controversial times," Mr. Yeltsin said in a telegram read out at Mr. Solzhenitsyn's first news conference on Russian soil.

"I am convinced that your talent and your experience as a historian and thinker will help us all in reorganising Russia."

But the writer said he was not going to seek an official position in post-Communist Russia.

"I will not occupy any political post neither by appointment nor by election," he told journalists. "I want to help our homeland... by public activity, through meetings, by persuasion and through my articles."

The 75-year-old Nobel Literature Prize winner looked fit and vigorous at the news conference after two busy days since he set foot in Russia.

From Vladivostok he plans to travel by train to Moscow.

The plane bringing Solzhenitsyn from Alaska made a short refuelling stop in the Pacific port of Magadan, once an unofficial capital of a huge network of labour camps set up by Soviet dictator Josef Stalin.

The writer spent years in the camps and later wrote of his experience in his book *Gulag Archipelago*. Its publication in the West led to his arrest and expulsion by Soviet authorities in 1974.

Mr. Solzhenitsyn went shopping Saturday morning for the first time since returning from exile and was astonished by the prices.

He was astounded to discover that sausages cost 10,000 rubles a kilo in Vladivostok's central market.

"When I left the prices were quite different. It's strange for me, I'm not used to it," he told a stallholder. Sausages cost barely one or two rubles a kilo in 1974, the year that the dissident author was expelled.

"I've never seen so many people. It's usually quiet here," one of the "bomjits" (homeless) grumbled as he was almost trodden underfoot by the foreign journalists flocking after Mr. Solzhenitsyn.

Several onlookers, particularly elderly women, greeted the 75-year-old writer and thanked him for his struggle against communism. "You are right, you are right," one of them called out to him. "Look over there, there is a great man going by," one man said as he pointed out the writer to his 10-year-old daughter.

"He's a second Dostoevsky, a true patriot, a true Russian," Vladimir Agriev, a 58-year-old



Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn and his wife Natasha tour the central market in Vladivostok (AFP photo)

engineer, told AFP.

Mr. Solzhenitsyn, surrounded by security men and a swarm of journalists, exchanged only a few words with the market traders, to ask them about their prices.

As well as shopping, the former dissident visited a regional hospital to enquire about its needs in equipment and medicine.

During his visit, he found himself stuck in a lift for more than 20 minutes. He took it very calmly — lift breakdowns are extremely common here — and used the time to question the hospital's director about working conditions, jotting down her replies in a little notebook. He explained that he did not want to talk to the patients out of respect for their privacy.

The director meanwhile explained how deregulation of the Russian economy had forced the hospital to import honey from neighbouring China even though Vladivostok's central market.

The writer refused to make any statements as he left the hospital, saying "how can I comment? I need to make lots of visits over several months."

Tonton Macoutes return officially to lend support to Haitian army

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (R) — The feared Tonton Macoute militia which helped Haiti's Duvalier dictatorship brutally rule the country for almost three decades announced Friday it was putting its forces at the disposal of the army to help fight any foreign invasion.

"The VNS is offering its services to the country in case of military intervention," spokesman Gerard Dessaint said, using the group's official title, the Volunteers for National Security.

It was the first official statement from the militia since it was formally disbanded after the fall of Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier.

The Tonton Macoutes were formed in the late 1950s as the private militia of dictator Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier and helped kill, torture and silence thousands of Haitians opposed to the family's 29-year reign.

Although some of the estimated 300,000 members were killed in the attacks that followed Mr. Duvalier's downfall, the Macoutes rose from the ashes last autumn when faced with the scheduled return of the country's exiled

President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Several neo-Duvalierist organisations have flourished since autumn, with the help of the army leaders who overthrew Mr. Aristide in September 1991.

Many Haitians did not know Ms. Dessaint and said she was not a top former leader.

Ironically, the Macoutes and the army were often at odds during the Duvalier's reign but formed a common alliance against Mr. Aristide.

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Rwandan rebels close in on government base

NAIROBI (AFP) — Rwandan rebels were Saturday closing in on Gitarama, the base of Rwanda's self-proclaimed government, as mortar shells landed near a hospital run by the Red Cross in Kigali, a U.N. spokesman said.

Intermittent artillery duels, between the mainly Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and government forces, raged in central Kigali after a truce earlier in the day, spokesman Abdul Kabia said by telephone from Kigali.

The rebel fighters were advancing southwards from the capital towards the town of Gitarama where the interim government is based.

Government officials fled to Gitarama, 40 kilometres south of Kigali, after the RPF turned its offensive towards the capital a month ago.

Heavy fighting was also reported around the northern town of Ruhengeri, Mr. Kabia added.

Several mortar rounds landed near the International Committee of the Red Cross hospital in central Kigali, but there were no casualties or damage. It was not clear which side fired the shells, Mr. Kabia said.

U.N. troops evacuated another 695 civilians from the

rebel-besieged capital to safer areas on the outskirts, Mr. Kabia said.

The evacuees included 332 Tutsi holed up at Hotel Mille Collines for several weeks and 363 Hutus who had taken refuge at the Amahoro Stadium.

About 245 displaced people remained in the hotel and 5,500 at the stadium, Mr. Kabia added. Some 480 people were moved from Kigali Friday.

Government troops and Hutu militias have abandoned several positions as RPF fighters tightened their grip on the capital.

Rwanda plunged back into tribal bloodletting after Hutu President Juvénal Habyarimana was killed in an alleged rocket attack on his plane on April 6.

An estimated 200,000 to half a million people have been killed. Some 500,000 others have fled the country.

Many of the victims came from the Tutsi minority or were moderate members of the majority Hutu tribe, massacred by extremist Hutu militias.

The RPF launched an offensive against government troops and Hutu militia in an attempt to stop the massacres and grab power from the Hutu-dominated government.

Meanwhile, Kenyan officials said the heads of state of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zaire will meet in the Kenyan capital on June 6, to discuss the Rwandan crisis.

The meeting is being convened by Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi.

Mr. Arap Moi told a gathering in the central district of Muranga Friday that neighbouring countries should not "sit back" and watch mass killings in the central African state without taking action.

The U.N. food agency said Saturday that some 1.6 million Rwandans displaced since the country plunged into civil war seven weeks ago were in desperate need of food aid.

The World Food Programme (WFP) was, jointly with the Red Cross, feeding 240,000 displaced people in inaccessible areas of Kigali, northeastern and southern Rwanda, but that was just a fraction of those in need, a WFP statement released here said.

"There is growing acute need of relief assistance for the affected population, particularly in Kigali and southern Rwanda where cases of malnutrition are reported to be on the increase," WFP Director Catherine Bertini was quoted as saying.

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A Rwandan woman who was beaten so badly and left near death on a hill in Kabgayi, 65km south of Kigali, is being treated by International Red Cross nurses after she had her left leg amputated below the knee (AFP photo)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Yemen kidnappers free Dutch engineers

SANA (R) — Two Dutch development engineers, kidnapped by Yemeni tribesmen in March, have been released by their captors, tribal and diplomatic sources said Saturday. The diplomatic sources said Gerard Jeurissen and Jan Van Der Gun had arrived in the capital Sanaa after being handed over to intermediaries. A third Dutchman, Wilbert Elderhorst, captured with the other two on March 25 was freed several weeks ago. The three, who were working on a project to develop water resources for Sanaa, were seized by the Jahn tribe which is demanding rent from oil firms using tribal land. Tribes in northern Yemen often kidnap foreigners to force demands on the government and foreign companies but the Dutchmen have been held longer than other hostages in recent times. The tribal sources said Mr. Jeurissen and Mr. Van Der Gun had been handed over in the Khawlan area east of Sanaa to Sheikh Mohammad Naji Al Ghader, who had been mediating for their release. They were believed held in a hideout 150 kilometres east of the city.

Rival factions resume fighting in Kabul

KABUL (AFP) — A clash intensified into a two-hour duel with heavy weaponry in west Kabul Saturday between rival Shi'ite Hezb-I-Wahdat and Sunni Ittihad-I-Islami, causing several casualties, hospital and party sources said. Wahdat, an Iranian-backed Shi'ite faction, and Ittihad, a Saudi-backed Sunni Muslim party allied with Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, have frequently fought since the 1992 takeover of Kabul by Mujahideen. The latest bout started two days ago with an exchange of fire between the rival fighters, intensifying Saturday into a two-hour exchange of heavy weaponry, Wahdat soldiers said. At least seven wounded men have been admitted for treatment, the staff at the Karte Se Hospital in the Wahdat-held area said. The Shi'ite faction is loosely linked to an alliance forged by Afghan Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Uzbek warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum to unseat Mr. Rabbani. Since January, when the Hekmatyar-Dostum front launched a bid to oust the president from power, more than 2,500 people have been killed and over 17,000 injured in the Kabul battles. The Wahdat-Ittihad fighting coincides with an ongoing tussle within the Shi'ite party between two groups over the selection of a new leader and central committee for the organisation.

Nigeria holds final conference poll

LAGOS (R) — Nigeria's military government pressed ahead Saturday with elections for delegates to a planned constitutional conference despite a low voter turnout in the first stage of the poll. Winners of last Monday's ward-level elections were voting to choose 273 delegates to represent their districts at next month's conference. The government says the conference will decide what kind of political system Nigerians want for their country, which has been under military rule for most of its independent life. "It's a simple process and we are doing all right," said one electoral officer in Nigeria's main city Lagos. The conference is the main political programme of military ruler General Sani Abacha, who seized power in November to end anarchy unleashed when a previous military leader annulled Nigeria's presidential poll.

Pope rejects 'politically correct' catechism

VATICAN CITY (R) — Pope John Paul, who is set to reaffirm a Catholic ban on women priests, was presented with the English version of the church's new catechism, which women's groups have slammed as sexist. The new universal catechism, or book of religious education, is the Roman Catholic Church's first since the turn of the century and the most extensive since that issued in 1566 following the Council of Trent. The English text was delayed by nearly two years by a debate over whether it should be stripped of words such as "man" and "men" and "mankind" when these referred to both men and women. A translation by an American priest from the original French version, issued in 1992, avoided exclusive language — the use of the male pronoun and adjective — to cover both sexes. Some American and British bishops felt such language was discriminatory but the Vatican did not agree and ordered the translation changed. The prologue in the original translation read: "God, our saviour desires everyone to be saved..." The Vatican rejected this version and reworked it to read: "God, our saviour desires all men to be saved..."

Bangladeshi MPs to visit Israel

DHAKA (AFP) — Two Bangladeshi members of parliament have left for first visit by MPs from this country to Israel, the Daily Star newspaper reported Saturday. Ziaur Rahman, of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party, and deputy opposition leader and Awami League lawmaker Abdus Samad Azad, left Dhaka late Friday for a 10-day visit. It will include a tour of Jericho, which last month became a Palestinian autonomous city. Mr. Rahman and Mr. Azad also plan to visit Tel Aviv and occupied Jerusalem, the newspaper said. A Bangladeshi Foreign Ministry source said Saturday the two had gone there on the invitation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation

(PLO), and Tel Aviv was just a stop-over. He said the two countries maintained unofficial contacts, especially in trading, but there were "no immediate" plans to restore diplomatic ties.

U.N. calls new conference on Bosnia

ZAGREB (AFP) — U.N. envoy Yasushi Akashi has invited the warring parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina to negotiate a comprehensive cessation of hostilities at a meeting in Geneva Thursday and Friday, the U.N. Protection Force announced Saturday. The co-chairmen of the peace conference in the former Yugoslavia, Lord Owen of the European Union and Thorvald Stoltenberg of the United Nations, as well as U.S. special envoy Charles Redman and his Russian counterpart Vitaly Churkin were also invited, a UNPROFOR statement said. Mr. Akashi will be accompanied at the Geneva meeting by UNPROFOR commander Lieutenant General Bertrand De Lapresle, and the UNPROFOR commander in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Rose, the statement added. The announcement comes after France hosted two-day talks between the so-called contact group on Bosnia-Herzegovina — the European Union, Russia and the United States — and Bosnian Croats, Muslims and Serbs Wednesday and Thursday in the Alpine hideaway of Tallinn, not far from Geneva (see page 8).

33 executed for car theft in China

BEIJING (AFP) — The Guangdong authorities have executed 33 people as part of a major clampdown on car theft which has reached epidemic proportions in the southern Chinese province, according to a report seen here Saturday. The 33 were among 101 criminals given public trials across the province, the Yangcheng Evening News said in its Friday edition. The death sentences were handed down Friday by intermediate people's courts and the executions were carried out immediately. According to the newspaper, car theft accounted for one third of all major crimes in Guangdong last year, with the value of the cars stolen totalling more than one billion yuan (\$115 million). It was believed to be the largest number of executions carried out in one province in a single day this year.

Major draws fire for attack on beggars

LONDON (R) — Prime Minister John Major provoked debate Saturday over a centuries-old issue — should society tolerate beggars or punish them. Mr. Major told a British newspaper Friday that beggars were offensive and should be reported to police. "It is an offensive thing to beg," he told the Bristol Evening Post. "It is unnecessary. So I think people should be very rigorous with it." Opposition politicians and charities for the homeless leapt to attack Mr. Major's comments, which threatened to become an issue in next month's elections for the European Parliament. Labour Party campaign coordinator Jack Straw told a news conference that Mr. Major's Conservative government was responsible for an increase in the numbers of beggars in Britain's cities. "The number of beggars on the streets is a potent symbol of the social collapse that has occurred under John Major's government," he said. An acute housing shortage developed under Mr. Major's predecessor Margaret Thatcher after she introduced tighter social-security regulations and a policy to discharge mentally disturbed people from hospital into the community.

IRA under pressure to seek peace

OXFORD, England (AP) — The Irish prime minister says if the IRA rejects the chance of peace offered by a British-Irish proposal and continues to kill, its campaign will fail. Albert Reynolds, in a speech late Friday at Oxford University, said any attempt to maintain violence would discredit the "so-called peace strategy" built by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) political ally Sinn Fein in recent months. "The demonstrable futility of continuing the armed struggle in defiance of the overwhelming will of the Irish people will as surely undermine any attempt by them to continue over a long period, just as the loss of belief in apartheid or in communism led to the sudden internal collapse of their systems," Mr. Reynolds said. "The twin-track strategy of the armalite (rifle) and the ballot box has come to the parting of the ways."

Top Kashmir militant captured

SRINAGAR (AFP) — Indian army troops captured a top Kashmir Muslim militant leader Saturday in the state capital of Srinagar, army sources said. Mausam Ali, supreme commander of the Al Barq organisation, offered no resistance and gave himself up after his hideout in the Rajbagh district was surrounded by troops, the sources said. The Al Barq, or lightning, is one of the several Muslim militant groups campaigning for Kashmir's secession from Hindu-majority India and merger with its Muslim neighbour Pakistan. Meanwhile, army and paramilitary troops were continuing a sweep Saturday in woods surrounding the district of Doda where violence linked to Muslim militancy has left 15 people dead in the past week. Kashmir government officials said the operation launched Friday was ordered to flush out foreign mercenaries believed to be hiding in the area.

Rebel Chechen leader escapes assassination

MOSCOW (R) — The interior minister of Russia's breakaway region of Chechnya and his police chief were killed in a car blast in which the territory's president narrowly escaped assassination, Interfax News Agency said Saturday.

It quoted a senior official of the North Caucasian republic as saying a car, packed with explosives, blew up when a motorcade passed by late Friday carrying Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev and some of his top ministers.

The blast hurled Mr. Dudayev's car 10 metres off course, but the president was not hurt, Chechen Press Minister Mavlo Udugov said.

However, Interior Minister Magomed Eldiyev, Criminal Police Chief Sato-Ali Bayayev and their driver were killed.

Interfax said the interior minister and his police chief were going to Grozny, the capital of the north Caucasian region, to give a news conference about a hijack drama that ended earlier this week.

In the joint operation with Russian police forces, hijackers were foiled in a bid to flee by helicopter with hostages, explosives and millions of dollars in ransom.

Russia's Interior Ministry

said the four hijackers Friday landed their helicopter in Chechnya. But their escape into nearby woods was blocked by a waiting Chechen commando.

It was the first time Chechnya, which proclaimed independence from Moscow in 1991, cooperated with Russian forces.

Officials in Chechnya could not be immediately reached for confirmation of the car blast.

Interfax, which had earlier reported that the blast was caused by a land mine, said the incident occurred some 20 kilometres west of Grozny.

It said Mr. Dudayev held an emergency meeting of his government, after which he imposed a month-long curfew in the region and announced a day of mourning to be observed Sunday.

Mr. Udugov was quoted as saying that initial investigations showed that an explosive device used in the assassination attempt was similar to those used by Russian Secret Services.

Russia has recently taken steps to normalise relations with Chechnya. A senior aide of President Boris Yeltsin has said that the Russian leader might meet Mr. Dudayev soon.

COLUMN

Woman wakes up on way to morgue

PORT ELIZABETH, South Africa (AFP) — A South African woman woke up as hospital staff were getting her body ready for the morgue three hours after declaring her dead, the South African press association (SAPA) reported Friday. Maria Botha, 66, who was in a coma when she arrived at the hospital, was fitted with a pacemaker. She was deemed to have died in the intensive care unit when "her pupils no longer reacted, she was cold and blue and the machine monitoring her heartbeats showed a steady line," her daughter Alma Nel said.

A priest recited a funeral prayer and Mrs. Botha's family left the Greenacres Hospital in Port Elizabeth to make burial arrangements. Three hours later, hospital staff told Ms. Nel her mother was alive after all. "When I went back, she gave a weak smile and said she was feeling dizzy," Ms. Nel said.

Prince Charles strolls through Brandenburg Gate

BERLIN (R) — Prince Charles, heir to the British throne, strolled cheerfully through Brandenburg Gate with Berlin's mayor and called the reunification of the city divided by the cold war an enormous yet exciting task. The Prince of Wales was left momentarily speechless after a German onlooker asked him to pass on his regards to Princess Diana, his estranged wife. "I asked him to give my regards to Princess Di and be just swallowed hard and acted as if he hadn't heard me," said Charlotte Marten, a 64-year-old pensioner from West Berlin. "It would have been nice to see Princess Di here as well," she added. Prince Charles, in the German capital to attend the final parade for British troops, moved on quickly to other well-wishers before walking to the nearby site for the new British embassy on Wilhelmstrasse. Prince Charles told a reception at City Hall that many in Britain were filled with sadness about the departure of British forces from Berlin. The last of the 3,000 British troops who protected Berlin during the cold war are to leave by September.

"Fascists do not exist in my government. They do not exist. There is nobody in my government who is against liberty and democracy," he said.

They talk about it with great flippancy, bawdily and with confused ideas," he added in the left-leaning daily L'Unita.

In the Washington Post interview Friday, Mr. Berlusconi tried to quell international concern over the presence of neo-fascists in his cabinet.

"Fascists do not exist in my government. They do not exist. There is nobody in my government who is against liberty and democracy," he said.

What Berlusconi is saying is absolutely false," Leo Vaiani, a life senator from the Republican Party and a well-known anti-fascist, told the Milan dailies.

His coalition includes the neo-fascist National Alliance. Three of its five ministers in the government are from the Italian Social Movement (MSI), Mussolini's political heirs.

London airport jammed as Britons flee rain

LONDON (R) — The world's busiest international airport, London's Heathrow, was battling to cope with an expected record numbers of passengers Saturday as holidaymakers fled wet spring weather, airport officials said.

Police were called in to control the crowds and at one point limited access to Terminal 1, which is used by British Airways (BA) for its European and domestic flights.

An airline spokeswoman said the congestion was mainly caused by passengers flying out for a three-day weekend as Monday is a public holiday.

The crowding caused average delays to BA's European flights or around 50 minutes, but they grew to as long as two hours.

3 men jailed in cross-channel beer racket

LONDON (R) — A British court jailed three men who ran a cross-channel drinks racket buying up cheap French beer and wine and reselling it illegally in Britain. The smuggling gang made at least 42 trips on the Dover-Calais ferry in three months, bringing back vans loaded with cheap drink to sell in south Wales and evading payment of duty. Prosecuting lawyer Roger Thomas estimated that £70,000 (\$105,700) of unpaid duty was involved in the January to April 1993 period when the 11-man gang operated the illegal ring. Judge Michael Burr jailed the three ringleaders for terms of between three and nine months, and said the gang had used "an army of helpers" in an organised conspiracy to flout the law and to try and make easy money.

Undercover teams of customs officers tracked the gang's vehicles from the channel port to south Wales, and the 11 men admitted their part in the conspiracy to evade paying duty. Senior customs investigator Mark Hampton said afterwards: "This was the largest case of duty evasion at the time, but there are other prosecutions pending elsewhere."

Mr. Burr relaxed its rules on importing drink at the start of 1993 allowing large personal allowances and even unlimited amounts if the drink was used for private parties.

Japanese Socialists are ready for new coalition

TOKYO (AFP) — Japanese Socialist leaders Saturday emphasised their desire for a key role in creating a new coalition to replace Prime Minister Tsutomu Hata's minority government.

Tomio Murayama, chairman of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), said at the party's central committee the SDP "must return to power and actively participate in moves to establish a new coalition framework."

Christopher details plans

Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher has pledged that the United States will keep up the pressure on Beijing over human rights, despite de-linking the issue from trade.

Mr. Christopher, addressing the Asia Society here late Friday, the day after Washington renewed the most favoured nation (MFN) status for China for another year, said that the United States would not "on the invisible hand of economics alone" when dealing with Beijing.